

**To:** ERT (Everyone)[ERT\_Everyone@epa.gov]  
**From:** Compton, Harry  
**Sent:** Thur 8/20/2015 12:37:10 PM  
**Subject:** FW: EOC Spot Report Update #13: Regions 6, 8, and 9 Gold King Mine Release into Animas River; San Juan County, CO

**From:** Eoc, Epahq  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 19, 2015 7:04 PM  
**To:** Eoc, Epahq; OSWER OEM EOC Positions  
**Subject:** EOC Spot Report Update #13: Regions 6, 8, and 9 Gold King Mine Release into Animas River; San Juan County, CO

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## **EOC Spot Report Update #13: Regions 6, 8, and 9 Gold King Mine Release into Animas River; San Juan County, CO**

**US Environmental Protection Agency**

**Report as of 1900 EDT on 08/19/2015**

**Overview:**

On 8/5, an EPA and Colorado State Division of Reclamation Mining and Safety team was working to investigate and address contamination at the abandoned Gold King Mine in San Juan County, CO. A large release of mine wastewater into Cement Creek occurred while an EPA site assessment team was conducting site investigation activities. Initial estimates indicated that the release was approximately one million gallons that was held behind unconsolidated debris near an abandoned mine portal. The estimate has since been revised to 3 million gallons. There were several workers at the site at the time of the breach and all were unharmed. The release's path flowed through three of EPA's regions: Region 8—Colorado, Utah and the Southern Ute Tribe; Region 6--New Mexico; and, Region 9--Navajo Nation.

The La Plata County Sheriff opened the Animas River to recreational use on 8/14 with a health advisory from Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE). A Colorado State veterinarian has cleared water use for animals.

The Navajo Nation President's office held a meeting with Navajo EPA on Monday 8/17 to discuss neighboring states lifting of water advisories and reportedly evaluating a similar action by Navajo Nation. The President decided this morning to keep river restrictions in place today. He will reconsider daily depending on data and recommendations from Navajo EPA.

The Attorney Generals of Utah and Colorado are visiting the Gold King Mine site today (8/19).

**State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions:**

The Region 8 Unified incident Command includes EPA, State of Colorado Office of Emergency Management (OEM), the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT), and La Plata County. The City of Durango, CDPHE, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe are Agency Representatives. The SUIT continues water delivery. As a proactive measure, the SUIT is installing reverse osmosis on tribal residential kitchen taps.

US Bureau of Reclamation (USBOR) is conducting road stabilization in and around the mine site.

EPA Region 8 is coordinating with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) in

response to public health concerns associated with the mine waste plume.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) measured increased river flows and provisionally calculated flow volume of approximately 3 million gallons discharged from the Gold King Mine.

#### **EPA Actions:**

*Response Organization:* EPA is integrated in Unified EPA Area Command (UEAC) in Durango, CO and in three Incident Command Posts (ICPs) in Silverton and Durango, CO and Farmington, NM. The Farmington, NM ICP is composed of two branches: one in Farmington, NM and another in Lake Powell at the Arizona and Utah Border. Unified EPA Area Command in Durango, CO includes representatives from EPA Regions 6, 8 and 9. The Region 10 REOC activated on 8/14, to support the Gold King and Typhoon responses. The Headquarters Emergency Operations Center (HQ EOC) activated to Level 1 Operations on Tuesday, August 11.

EPA continues to operate and work on optimizing four treatment and sedimentation ponds at the mine site which are treating water by lowering acidity levels and removing dissolved metals.

*Public Information:* A public-facing website has been set up for the response: <http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine>. EPA is reviewing sampling data and developing public messaging to include the development of a wider message that river conditions are returning to normal.

Comprehensive Community Outreach continues with 5 Region 9 CICs in the Farmington ICP traveling daily to various Navajo Chapter Houses for scheduled meetings with local residents.

Region 8 maintains a general incident hotline phone number for Region 8. As of 8/17, the call center has received 730 calls.

Social Media Sites being maintained by the UC JIC through local and state resources are:

Blog – [goldkingminerelease.blogspot.com](http://goldkingminerelease.blogspot.com)

FB – [facebook.com/goldkingminerelease](https://facebook.com/goldkingminerelease)

Twitter - @GKMRelease

YouTube Channel – Gold King Mine Release

The blog has received just under 500 hits in the last 48 hours.

*Sampling and Data Review:* On 8/17, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) officials announced it had examined data provided by states upstream of Lake Powell and closer to the Gold King Mine spill. ADEQ's analysis of data released by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality of samples collected about 100 miles from Lake Powell (closest Utah sample) shows that water quality conditions in the San Juan River upstream of Lake Powell are generally consistent with pre-spill conditions. See more at: <https://ein.az.gov/emergency-information/emergency-bulletin/adeq-update-colorado-gold-king-mine-spill>

The Lake Powell Branch has been refining plans for the upcoming USGS/NPS 14-day sampling expedition beginning at the end of this week. EPA will not be integrating its sampling efforts into the USGS/NPS Mercury study, instead EPA is focusing its sampling efforts on San Juan River Gold King Mine related water and sediment quality influences on Lake Powell.

Drinking Water Sampling: Private well sampling is ongoing. Out of 105 groundwater wells

sampled, only seven (7) wells exceeded Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for lead and arsenic. However, these samples were taken from the well head prior to going through the home treatment systems. EPA Region 8 will be conducting well water sampling as needed and calling those residents sampled to provide them analytical results. For residents that had well samples exceeding drinking water standards in the wells, those wells will be flushed and then resampled at both the tap and at the well.

Surface Water & Sediment Sampling: EPA continues to collect water quality samples from nine (9) locations in the river near intakes for Aztec, Farmington, Lower Valley Water Users Association, Morning Star Water Supply System and the North Star Water User Association. UEAC and HQ were sent surface water sample data from public water supply intakes for August 12 and sediment sample data from public water supply intakes for 8/10-13.

Irrigation Ditch Sampling: The irrigation ditch sampling effort has been completed. Sediment sample data from irrigation ditch sediment sample data from 8/13 was posted on 8/18.

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Agriculture/Livestock: Irrigation ditches along the Animas River have returned to normal irrigation and livestock watering operations. EPA has delivered 1,068,270 gallons of water for irrigation and 36,720

gallons of water for livestock watering.

*Water Delivery and Supply:* Morningstar is operating on slow flow capacity due to the turbidity generated in the settling ponds when the water tankers first filled the ponds. As of the evening of 8/18, the ponds were clearing out, in addition, the operators are having to backwash more than normal to keep sediment out of the filters.

When the water was being pumped from Farmington to the Morningstar tank the evening of 8/18, a slip joint had to be fixed. When the line pressure reached 110 psi, there was a blow out that occurred under Wildflower Road. No one was injured, the operator crew scrambled to stop traffic, close the street, and secure the area. The morning of 8/19, the crew will place a mega-clamp on the line and restart the pump. The hope is that the current system's infrastructure will hold so that the pressure can reach 110-140 psi in order to fill the Morningstar tank. The operators will sample and disinfect the line per their normal operating procedures for fixing line breaks.

EPA is coordinating with NMED and the water system about taking special samples or resuming their normal compliance sampling for coliforms in the distribution system to check on the quality of the treated water.

Navajo Tribal Utility Authority has identified 13 locations for EPA storage and distribution of water for agriculture and livestock use. EPA continues providing over 16,000 gallons of water per day to each of these locations. NTUA is working on putting their water distribution lines back online so that delivery of water can be discontinued.

On 8/19, EPA HQ convened a conference call on long-term watershed planning with the affected states and Indian Nations as well as EPA HQ, UEAC, and the individual EPA regions. Conversations covered current status of sampling efforts, availability of historical water quality data, and brainstorming on possible coordinated plans for long-term monitoring.

Also, on 8/19 a National Response Team (NRT) conference call was held to provide a situational update.

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*Claims:* EPA has a claims process for compensating citizens who suffer personal injury or property damage caused by U.S. government actions. The process includes guidance on documentation that may be required to support claims for loss of employment and loss of

income, among other claims. Region 8 has had inquiries about such claims from business owners in CO. A FAQ on the claims process was posted to <http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine> on 8/18.

A Disaster Assistance Center (DAC) was requested by La Plata County. The request was implemented by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) on 8/18 and 19. The EPA will be accepting claims at this event and CDPHE will also be present.

See previous reports for past EPA regional and HQ actions.

**Media Interest: High**

<http://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/local-news/interior-department-to-lead-investigation-of-gold-king-mine-waste-spill-into-animas-river>

<http://www.9news.com/story/news/local/2015/08/19/gold-king-mine-recovery/31967057/>

[http://www.denverpost.com/environment/ci\\_28647978/colorado-faces-230-mines-leaking-heavy-metals-into](http://www.denverpost.com/environment/ci_28647978/colorado-faces-230-mines-leaking-heavy-metals-into)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/17/us/animas-river-colorado-mine-spill-epa.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/17/us/animas-river-colorado-mine-spill-epa.html?_r=0)

[http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci\\_28645132/epa-plans-water-treatment-system-gold-king-mine](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_28645132/epa-plans-water-treatment-system-gold-king-mine)

**The HQ EOC will continue to monitor and provided updates as needed.**

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